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Memorandum in response to P.D.P. to ADPC + 2 Jan '52

3 January 1952

SUBJECT: A National Psychological Strategy

PROBLEM:

To ascertain ways and means of bringing about a retraction of Soviet power and influence.

BACKGROUND:

1. A special committee functioning under the aegis of the PSB has developed an initial approach to the solution of this problem. This initial approach is the eleventh draft of an agreement reached between the members of the committee. The fact that it took so long to reach this agreement indicates the wide area of views which had to be compromised and also indicates the rather diffused nature of the approaches suggested by the committee. I have been told by a PSB representative that the main value in this approach is that for the first time it binds State Department officials to participate in the exercise. If opc is to make a real contribution to the solution of this problem I believe it must make its contribution in two steps. First, we must devise an optimum national strategy developed without regard for the inhibitions which might be imposed upon it if compromises must be reached with other departments at each turn of the road. This strategy should set the goal, the party line which we should endeavor to sell to the PSB and to other departments, as we go along. Secondly, we must plan in accordance with the limitations imposed by the PSB. But if our own thinking is to be fettered by all the restrictions which are in the PSB committee report, we will contribute little to a plan for the reduction in Soviet power.

2. It is also

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2. It is also to be noted that the PSB committee report apparently limits the problem to psychological means, i.e., overt propaganda and any covert operations that might be undertaken by CIA. Again, I believe we must accept this restriction initially but endeavor to enlarge the scope of the study when and wherever feasible.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

1. What we are seeking is a national course of action which will change to our favor the strength relationship between the US and the USSR. The positive measures required to increase the strength of the US must be undertaken by the regular overt agencies of the government. The reduction in the strength of the Soviet Union must be undertaken by both overt and covert agencies of the government. Before such a reduction can take place an agency (the PSB) must be charged with responsibility for developing our over-all plan of campaign and it must likewise be charged with responsibility for insuring the coordinated execution of the plan.

2. Our first task is to utilize existing capabilities to take such overt/covert actions as will throw the Politburo off balance and add confusion as to our real intentions. At the same time, we must plan for the orderly build-up of our overt/covert capabilities and for the eventual employment of these capabilities in such a way as to regain the strategic initiative from the USSR.

3. The essence of strategy is to make your moves seem indeterminate to the enemy while, at the same time you place him in a strategic straight jacket which will make his counter-moves subject to easy calculation. In a sense the USSR has us in this position at the present time. Russia can make a wide variety of moves, none of which we can anticipate with any exactitude. The same can be said of the USSR's major ally, Communist China. The Chinese have open to them a variety of courses of action. Our counter-measures to most Communist moves are painfully obvious and limited. With regard to China, for example, we have only one remaining major course of counter-action apparently open to us. NSC 118/2 on Korea, dated 20 December 51, indicates that we plan a violation of a Korean armistice (if one is ever agreed to) primarily by some form of air war against China itself.

4. We have gotten into this situation by a poor application of the doctrine of containment. We have treated each Soviet threat as a limited problem defined in terms of local conditions. This has enabled the Soviet Union to increase (from our point of view) the

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indeterminacy of its actions. It has permitted the Soviet Union to wage the cold war so as to cause major US dispersion of effort while retaining complete discretion as to the limits of its own commitments. This has amounted to US allowing the Politburo to deploy US resources (including our armed forces) and has denied to us that freedom of action which is the essential pre-condition for winning the cold war.

5. The US requires an integrated strategy capable of regarding the Soviet threat in its totality — a strategy which will not be diverted from its purpose by unwise reactions to isolated incidents confined to specific geographical areas. What we must do is devise a means of exploiting the total power relationships that exist between the free world and the USSR and not be trapped into fighting the problem in peripheral areas of the Soviet's own choosing and where they have massed in advance a preponderance of strength, whether it be psychological or military.

6. It is a truism that US strategy should attempt to maximize its advantages and minimize the Soviet Union's. This means that our moves must seek to regain the initiative by following a carefully timed and phased series of actions in various geographical areas.

7. During our build-up phase we should seek to deliver a series of significant blows aimed at throwing the Soviet's own program off balance. Initially most of this action will take place in the peripheral areas. The objective remains the reduction of Soviet power although the action itself will have considerable local coloring. This principle can best be illustrated by application to the Middle East. The turmoil now rampaging through the Middle East presents no immediate security threat to the US except in relation to the Soviet menace. The primary concern of the Western Allies today in regard to the Middle East is security of Middle East resources and bases for themselves or denial of them to the Soviets in the event of a conflict. To hold that elimination of the Kremlin, if it could be accomplished, would have little effect on the basic situation prevailing in the Middle East, is to miss the point globally; i.e., that had the Kremlin threat not existed the present Middle East situation itself would not have existed. The Middle East countries today are taking advantage of an international situation and playing a balance-of-the-powers game in reverse. It is true that it is local nationalisms and not Communist machinations that are the cause of the Middle East disturbances, but the fact that the major powers are sensitive to the global balance of power has prevented England, for example, from taking any strong-arm action in Iran. The situation is not unlike that which existed at the time of the American Revolution when England was engaged in a war with the other major continental powers.

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As a starter I suggest that we endeavor to develop the framework of an over-all strategy upon which we can build with the contributions received from various area divisions.

1. Certain of the area divisions (WE, NE, and FE) might suggest the one or two significant actions that might be devised for implementation in their areas which will -

- (a) throw the Communists off balance,
- (b) improve the American power and position in the area, and
- (c) gain respect (not necessarily friendship) for American resolution and ultimate superiority.

2. This line of action may eventually break down into a large number of specific measures to be undertaken by several agencies, all of whom need central direction. From the operational point of view, any hard distinction between the overt and covert aspects of the various actions is an artificial one, and will cause endless trouble if central coordination, based upon a broadly conceived plan is lacking. This coordination is lacking now; plans of action comprehensive enough to include all aspects of contra-Soviet action have not been developed, and in consequence the amount of progress has been negligible.

3. At the same time it is recognized that such coordinated plans of action are the end product which we are seeking and may not be welcomed by the PSB at the present stage of its planning. Consequently, the various area divisions might first break down their suggestions into actions which would have significant effect even if prosecuted by covert means alone. Secondly, they might indicate how these same actions if undertaken concurrently with the overt actions within the existing capabilities of other departments, might have increased significance. Thirdly, they might indicate actions which could be undertaken by one or more of the overt agencies (but whose execution might require a modification of the existing policy or a build-up of existing capabilities) but which if supported by a coordinated plan of covert operations would have maximum favorable repercussions on the over-all power situation in the area.

RECOMMENDATION:

I understand that the report of the PSB committee is again to be the subject of consideration, by the group present at the December 19th meeting, at a meeting to be held on Thursday, 10 January. I suggest we hold any further action on this question until that meeting takes place and a more definitive time schedule of planning participation is established. In the meantime, it might be well to brief Mr. Wisner verbally on the consensus of our views.

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